

Carla Beatriz Di Menna Medeiros Cosme

**D E T E R M I N A N T A S S E S S M E N T O F
V I R A L D I G I T A L C O N T E N T**

Dissertação para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Gestão, sob orientação
da Prof. Doutora Maria Teresa Borges Tiago



Universidade dos Açores

2014

A quem nunca deixou de acreditar.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Já dizia Fernando Pessoa: *Deus quer, o homem sonha, a obra nasce*. Tão somente querer e sonhar, porém, não é suficiente quando se pretende cruzar a meta para a qual este trabalho foi elaborado. É preciso esforço, sacrifício, perseverança e resiliência – mas não só de quem a pretende cruzar, senão também daqueles que assistem e acompanham a caminhada. Por isso, que aqui conste o meu mais profundo agradecimento a todos aqueles que, de alguma forma, contribuíram para este momento. Ajudar não é tão somente facilitar e compreender todos os altos e baixos que um processo destes acarreta. É também levantar ondas, pois ao navegá-las o processo fica tão mais desafiante quanto aliciante.

Como tal, academicamente, um agradecimento à coordenadora, por todo o apoio e orientação dados, assim como pela abertura de espírito para navegar pelas águas de um tema que acaba por ser, até certo ponto, tão admirado mas ao mesmo tempo tão temido. Um agradecimento, também, aos colegas, ex-colegas, e aos inquiridos que atenderam ao meu pedido para preencher o inquérito. Um agradecimento, também, aos amigos, que repetidas vezes ouviram um *Hoje não posso. Tenho de ir tratar da tese* e deram esse espaço, esse tempo, mas ainda assim também o seu incentivo e carinho, mesmo que eu não o pudesse verbalizar em retorno e naquele momento. Um agradecimento, também, aos colegas de trabalho, que compreenderam todas as horas que precisei de investir para que este projecto se tornasse possível, e que atenderam aos meus pedidos para me ausentar em nome de tal, e ainda que isso implicasse algum custo pessoal.

Mais especialmente, porém, um agradecimento aos meus pais e família, e àqueles que importam como tal. Sem estas pessoas nada disto seria possível. Tampouco sem eles não seria hoje aquilo que sou. E sem o apoio e paciência demonstrados, e até puxões de orelhas quando parecia estar tudo a sair dos eixos, não teria sido certamente a caminhada tão rica que se verificou. Foram, por certo, dois anos de mestrado muito preenchidos, e o vosso contributo fez toda a diferença.

Um bem-haja.

RESUMO

O facto de que as actividades de *eWoM* e as novas utilizações da Internet têm surtido mudanças na forma como os indivíduos comunicam tem sido alvo de debate frequente na comunidade académica. Tratam-se de fenómenos aos quais lhes foi reconhecida a capacidade de afectar a reputação de uma empresa e até, em casos extremos, sobrevivência, pois foi verificado que acabariam por alterar profundamente a forma como os indivíduos recolhem a informação de que necessitam para levar a cabo as suas decisões de compra, assim como as suas atitudes e expectativas em geral. Para além disso, atendendo a um uso intensificado das redes sociais digitais, fenómenos virais digitais começaram a emergir, atraindo também a atenção de académicos e negócios enquanto formas potencialmente adequadas e acessíveis de aumentar a notoriedade de uma dada empresa. Assim sendo, também começaram a aparecer estudos que tentam desmistificar que aspectos do conteúdo e que estruturas sociais digitais poderão potenciar a viralidade. Com efeito, o presente estudo pretende aferir se certos pressupostos anteriormente validados como sendo potenciadores da viralidade poderiam ser identificados no caso da página de “Retrospectiva” do Facebook. Tal página foi alvo de uma difusão em massa aquando do seu lançamento, ressaltando assim o interesse em perceber que aspectos relacionados com diferentes perfis de utilizador de Internet e de emoções provocadas pelo conteúdo teriam condicionado as acções tomadas pelos indivíduos. Tal foi testado por via de um inquérito aberto a todos os indivíduos que pretendessem participar, sob condição de terem uma conta no Facebook. As conclusões obtidas acabariam por ressaltar aspectos já anteriormente associados à viralidade, sobretudo contemplando os contributos de Berger e Milkman, mas também sobre a existência de diferentes grupos de indivíduos, com diferentes acções e comportamentos online, o que estará em concordância com contributos já feitos por Brandtzæg. Para além disto, considerações gerais e relativas à utilização da Internet e das redes sociais também foram possíveis à luz dos resultados obtidos, consolidando assim outros aspectos mencionados no decurso da revisão bibliográfica.

Palavras-chave: evolução da Internet, *eWoM*, marketing viral digital, redes sociais, perfis de utilizador de Internet, transmissão social, emoções provocadas pelo conteúdo

ABSTRACT

The fact that eWoM activity and overall Internet use have shaped the way individuals communicate has been subject to a rather intense and frequent debate in the academic community. These phenomena are said to have an impact on companies' reputations and, at the extreme, survival, as they have been found to be deeply affecting the way individuals gather the information necessary for their purchase decisions, and overall attitudes and expectations. Moreover, in light of an intensified use of social media applications, viral digital phenomena have started to emerge, and have also caught the attention of academics and businesses as potentially good and rather inexpensive ways to enhance a company's awareness. As such, studies that try to unveil what aspects of content and social structures may help enhance virality, have also started to appear. Thus, the following study aims to test whether previously validated aspects that have been found to make content more eager to virality can be identified, concerning Facebook's "A look back" page. Accordingly, this feature has experienced widespread diffusion upon its release, making it interesting to see if aspects related to Internet user profiles and content-evoked emotions had conditioned the action that individuals took. This has been tested through the use of a survey open to all willing respondents who held a Facebook account. The obtained results will therefore shed light on some of the previously validated drivers of diffusion, mainly set out by Berger and Milkman, but also on the fact that, indeed, there are different sets of individuals, with different online actions and behavior predispositions, as already noted by Brandtzæg. Nevertheless, further considerations regarding Internet and social media use may also be found in light of the obtained results, thus reinforcing some of the aspects mentioned in the course of the literature review.

Keywords: Internet evolution, eWoM, viral digital marketing, social networks, Internet user profiles, social transmission, content-evoked emotions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	iv
Table of Tables	vii
Table of Charts.....	ix
Table of Figures	x
List of Abbreviations	xi
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	3
2.1. Viral Marketing and WoM: Previously Acknowledged Phenomena	4
2.2. eWoM: Web 2.0, Social Media and UGC	6
2.2.1. Web 2.0.....	6
2.2.2. Social Media	8
2.2.3. User Generated Content.....	12
2.2.4. eWoM	13
2.3. Web 3.0: the Semantic Web and the Search Age	16
2.3.1. Web 3.0 and the Semantic Web.....	16
2.3.2. Search Age: from SEO 1.0 to SEO 3.0.....	18
2.4. Digital Marketing, Viral Digital Marketing and Social Media.....	20
2.4.1. Digital Marketing and E-Marketing	21
2.4.2. Viral Digital Marketing	23
2.4.3. Social Media as a New Element of the Promotion Mix	29
2.5. Consumer Empowerment: The Age of the Prosumer.....	33
2.6. Persistent Information, Emotions, and Other Drivers of Virality.....	36
2.6.1. Persistence of Information and Valence of Content	37

2.6.2. Emotions, Arousal and Social Transmission	38
2.6.3. Berger's Six Principles of Contagiousness	40
2.7. Impact on organizations: challenges and opportunities	43
2.7.1. Searching for New Strategies and Internal Restructuring	43
2.7.2. Getting Closer to Prosumers – Fast	45
2.7.3. Engaging on Social Media	46
2.7.4. Creating Content-Evoked Emotions and Achieving Epidemic Threshold ...	49
2.7.5. Potential Dangers, Threats and Final Remarks	50
Chapter 3 – Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses	53
3.1. Proposed Conceptual Model	54
3.2. Research Hypotheses	55
Chapter 4 – Methodology and Research Procedures	58
4.1. Methodology and Rationale	58
4.2. Survey Design and Pre-testing	60
4.2.1. Applied Measures and Response Formats	60
4.2.2. Case Study: Facebook's "A look back" feature	65
4.2.3. Pre-testing and Data Collection Server	68
4.3. Sampling Design	69
4.4. Data Collection	70
4.5. Statistical Analysis	71
Chapter 5 – Data Analysis	73
5.1. Demographic Variables	73
5.2. Social Media Usage	79
5.3. Facebook Usage	81
5.4. Facebook's "A look back" Content	83
5.5. Creation of Synthetic Indexes (MCA)	85

5.6. Cluster Analysis	89
5.6.1. Clusters' Demographic Characterization.....	91
5.6.2. Clusters' Social Media Usage.....	94
5.6.3. Facebook's "A look back" Content: filtered by Clusters	97
5.7. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA One-Way)	99
5.7.1. Facebook Posture	99
5.7.2. Online Actions	100
5.8. Multiple Linear Regression	102
Chapter 6 – Results of Hypotheses Testing	109
Chapter 7 – Findings and Practical Implications	115
7.1. Discussion and Practical Implications	115
7.2. Limitations and Future Research	119
References.....	121
Appendixes	127
Appendix I – Survey Structure	127
Appendix II – Data Analysis	134

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1 - Social Media Application Types	8
Table 2 – SEO 1.0 x SEO 2.0	18
Table 3 – Web 1.0 – Web 2.0 – Web 3.0.....	19
Table 4 – Study Hypotheses	55
Table 5 – Provided Social Media Channels.....	61
Table 6 – Survey Constructs, Applied Measures and Sources	63
Table 7 – Age and Gender of Respondents	73
Table 8 – Countries of Respondents	74
Table 9 – Academic Level of Respondents	75
Table 10 – Field of Study / Professional Field of Respondents.....	76
Table 11 - Own “A look back” Content and Action.....	83
Table 12 – Resulting Cronbach’s Alpha Scores	85
Table 13 – Final Cluster Centers (K-Means Clustering Method).....	89
Table 14 – Academic Levels: filtered by Clusters.....	92
Table 15 – Field of Study / Professional Field: filtered by Clusters Cases	93
Table 16 – Own “A look back” Content and Action: filtered by Clusters	97
Table 17 – Others’ “A look back” Content: Action (filtered by Clusters)	98
Table 18 – Others’ “A look back” Content: Reason (filtered by Clusters)	98
Table 19 – Tukey HSD Results for Facebook Posture Measures	99
Table 20 – Tukey HSD Results Action Related Indexes.....	100
Table 21 – Multiple Linear Regression: Approval Measures.....	103
Table 22 – Heavy Users * Content on Page * Action taken * Happiness and Envy	106

Table 23 – Action regarding own “A look back” * Clusters (χ^2 Test Results).....	107
Table 24 – Action regarding own “A look back” * Clusters (χ^2 Crosstabulation)	108
Table 25 – Hypotheses Testing: Summary of Results	114

TABLE OF CHARTS

Chart 1 - Search Interest Evolution: <i>Social Media, eWoM, Viral Content</i> and <i>Virality</i> .	53
Chart 2 - Search Interest Evolution of Facebook's "A look back" feature.....	65
Chart 3 – Disclosed information on Facebook: filtered by Gender (%).....	81
Chart 4 – Average number of Facebook friends: filtered by Gender (%)	82
Chart 5 – Susceptibility to Peer Influence	86
Chart 6 – Opinion Leadership Tendency	86
Chart 7 – Information Seeking Tendency	87
Chart 8 – Need for Emotion.....	87
Chart 9 – Need for Cognition	88
Chart 10 – Age and Gender: filtered by Clusters.....	91
Chart 11 – Disclosed information on Facebook: filtered by Clusters (%).....	95
Chart 12 – Average number of Facebook friends: filtered by Clusters (%)	96
Chart 13 – Approval Measures and "A look back" Content: filtered by Clusters.....	105

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Work Structure	2
Figure 2 – Social Presence/Media Richness and Self-Presentation/Self-Disclosure.....	10
Figure 3 – The honeycomb of social media.....	11
Figure 4 – Relationship between WoM and Viral Marketing	15
Figure 5 – The Changing IntraWeb – From 1.0 to 3.0	16
Figure 6 – <i>The four groups of Social Media Viral Marketing Campaigns</i>	27
Figure 7 – <i>Five pieces of advice when spreading a virus</i>	28
Figure 8 – <i>The new Communications Paradigm</i>	30
Figure 9 – Jonah Berger’s Six STEPPS to Virality	41
Figure 10 – Proposed Conceptual Model	54
Figure 11 – <i>Facebook’s Look Back Videos See 100M Shares (12/02/2014)</i>	66
Figure 12 – <i>Looking back on “Look Back” videos (excerpts)</i>	67

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WoM	Word of Mouth
eWoM	Electronic Word of Mouth
UGC	User Generated Content
RSS	Really Simple Syndication
AJAX	Asynchronous Java Script
OWL	Ontology Web Language
XML	Extensible Markup Language
RDF	Resource Description Framework
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SEM	Search Engine Marketing
IT	Information Technology
PC	Personal Computer
MUT	Media-User Typology
MCA	Multiple Correspondence Analysis
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
GU	Gender Unknown
IU	Internet Use
SK	Search Skill
CM	Convenience Motivation
EM	Entertainment Motivation
IM	Information Motivation
SM	Social Motivation
NFE	Need for Emotion
NFC	Need for Cognition

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

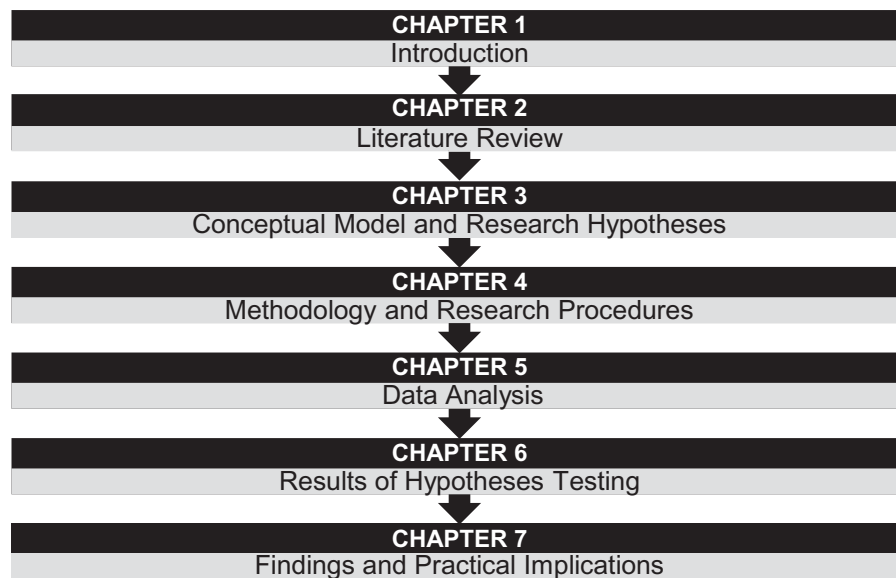
Viral digital content and eWoM phenomena have become frequently debated subjects for businesses and academics. As such, studies that aim to discuss what makes consumers share a given message, and the implications of this new form of WoM communication, have been emerging (Cheung & Thadani, 2010a, 2010b). As will be futurely discussed, some approaches are rather concerned with the social structures of digital social networks, while others seem to be rather concerned with aspects related to the content *per se* and the online behaviors of individuals.

Overall, regarding the first stream, it has been found that certain aspects of the social structure will benefit the spread of viral messages (Bampo, Ewing, Mather, Stewart, & Wallace, 2008). This is said to bring implications for managers who wish to aim for viral marketing maneuvers, meaning that some aspects should be taken into consideration prior to the launch of this sort of campaigns. The second aforementioned stream, on the other hand, has also revealed that virality can benefit from aspects such as the positivity of the message and the ability it has to inflict arousing emotions on the receivers (Berger & Milkman, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). However, other aspects have also been found to be beneficial, such as the practical value of information, and the fact that brands and firms are able to associate these messages to triggers that frequently appear on their targets' environments (Berger, 2013). Moreover, it has also been stated that people may share for self-enhancement reasons and to consider content as important as other aspects of outer appearance (Berger & Milkman, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

As follows, the aforementioned aspects will be relevant to this study. Additionally, it will also be of interest to understand how and why the evolution of the Internet and the intensified adoption of social media applications has been said to deeply shape both collective and individual behaviors of consumers. Thus, the hypotheses set out in this study relate to the assumptions that, in light of a new form of the Internet, there are different types of people. Consequently, these diverse groups would be expected to have distinct behavior predispositions and different emotional responses to the content they

come across. Hence, as virality is said to live on through the act of individuals sharing the same messages at very high rates, it would be expected for it to derive from a mix of certain actions and emotions that different sets of Internet users experience. Validating these hypotheses, in light of a Facebook feature that was subject to elevated levels of diffusion, will therefore be the main goal of the present study. Thus, the present approach won't be as focused on the structure of social digital networks, but rather behavioral aspects of individuals and aspects related to the messages and the emotions they were able to evoke. Hence, the present study is divided into seven chapters, which are as follows in Figure 1:

Figure 1 – Work Structure



As such, the remainder of the study is organized as follows. Chapter two presents the literature review conducted to provide theoretical support for the evaluation of the desired phenomena. Chapter three presents the proposed conceptual model and the contemplated research hypotheses, along with additional theoretical background to support them. Chapter four presents the applied methodology and research procedures. Chapter five consists in the performed data analysis, while chapter six contemplates the results of the performed data analysis. Lastly, chapter seven presents the main conclusions, implications, limitations and suggestions regarding directions for future research.